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Promotion and protection of the rights of children

**Letter dated 8 June 2010 from the Permanent Representative
of Uzbekistan to the United Nations addressed to the
Secretary-General**

I have the honour to convey to you information on the efforts of the Republic of Uzbekistan aimed at the protection and promotion of human rights with particular attention to the rights of children (see annex).

I would appreciate it if you could have the present letter and the annexed information circulated as a document of the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly under agenda item 65.

(Signed) Murad Askarov
Permanent Representative
of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Annex to the letter dated 8 June 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Uzbekistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Briefing notes on Uzbekistan's protection of human rights

Uzbekistan fully supports the main objectives of the Hague Global Child Labour Conference to strengthen the worldwide movement to achieve rapid universal ratification of International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions No. 138 (Minimum Age) and No. 182 (Worst Forms of Child Labour) and to advance efforts to reach the 2016 target goals. Additionally, Uzbekistan supports the third ILO Global Report on Child Labour, entitled "Accelerating Action against Child Labour".

In accordance with this support, the Uzbek Parliament has ratified 13 fundamental ILO Conventions, in particular the previously mentioned ILO Conventions No. 138 on Minimum Age for Admission to Employment and No. 182 on Worst Forms of Child Labour.

Additionally, in 2008, the Uzbek Government adopted by special decree the National Action Plan on Implementation of these ILO Conventions. This National Action Plan consists of 37 concrete measures to be undertaken in four stages:

- First: Improvement of legal controls over the illegal use of child labour;
- Second: Monitoring the implementation of ILO Conventions Nos. 138 and 182;
- Third: Implementing a broad awareness campaign on the requirements of ILO Conventions Nos. 138 and 182;
- Fourth: Implementation of projects of international cooperation aimed at abolishing the worst forms of child labour.

In furtherance of raising awareness and compliance, Uzbekistan, in partnership with the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) of ILO, has published an Uzbek language ILO/IPU "Handbook for Parliamentarians: Eliminating the worst forms of child labour: a practical guide to ILO Convention No. 182" as well as a "Collection of 30 main ILO Conventions".

Legal protections against child labour in Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan consistently implements and adheres to international standards as outlined by ILO in the sphere of prevention and prohibition of child labour, and secured by law reliable mechanisms for protection of the rights of children:

- Any attempt to compel child labour is prohibited constitutionally and State guarantees are in place for the protection of children.
- The law "On Guarantees of Child Rights" states that a child is a person whose age is under 18 corresponding to international norms, and fixes guarantees in preventing child labour.

- Labour legislation places a minimum age of employment as 16 and strictly defined exceptional cases as 15, and it puts into place conditions of labour and preferences to persons who are under 18.
- The law "On Fighting with Human Trafficking" puts into place mechanisms of counteractions to any forms of human exploitation, including enforcement of child labour laws.
- Criminal legislation puts into place stricter penalties for involving children in illegal activities.
- In 2001 Uzbekistan adopted the list of types of labour activity to which it is prohibited to involve children under 18.
- In 2009 administrative liability was introduced for use of child labour in environments with adverse conditions.

Monitoring mechanisms for enforcement of child labour provisions

Uzbekistan has created a system of State institutions with the express purpose of monitoring the child labour situation and eliminating the practice of illegal child labour, including:

- **The Complex of protection of family, motherhood and childhood**
Headed by the Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Uzbekistan, coordinating the activity of State bodies and management on the issue of implementation of child rights as guaranteed by the Constitution.
- **Commission on Affairs of Minors**
Created within the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan and headed by the Procurator-General of the Republic of Uzbekistan, whose responsibilities consist of dealing with almost all issues connected with the place of children in society, including monitoring non-admission of the worst forms of child labour.
- **Local monitoring by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection**
Conducting legal inspections of labour conditions and reviews of compliance with child labour laws undertaken in every district of Uzbekistan.

Non-governmental organization involvement

In Uzbekistan there are active non-governmental organizations, social foundations, institutions of civil society, and international organizations that reach out and monitor almost all issues pertaining to the rights of children and fostering their physical, spiritual and intellectual development.

Educational reforms

A powerful mechanism of prevention of child labour accepted by the international community is the implementation in Uzbekistan of reforms in the education system, which requires 12 years compulsory education for all children in the country.

Education spending in Uzbekistan has reached unprecedented levels with an annual investment in education of more than 10 per cent of its GDP or 37 per cent of the State budget. Today Uzbekistan is one of few countries of the world where the

average duration of education is almost 12 years and the age for finishing compulsory education is over 18.

The result of these efforts becomes clear and displays what an enormous potential of human capital Uzbekistan possesses. The literacy rate in Uzbekistan, according to figures of the World Bank, is one of the highest in the world with 99.34 per cent.

Prevention efforts

By developing an infrastructure of institutions of social protection of the population, with systems of material assistance to families, guardianship and trusteeship, Uzbekistan has created a culture of counteraction against the worst forms of child labour. In Uzbekistan it has almost eliminated such social phenomena as "child neglect", which in many countries is the main factor that generates the worst forms of child labour.

Today the provisions of the National Action Plan are being implemented consistently; monitoring the observance of labour legislation, in particular, on the minimum age of employment and the elimination of the worst forms of child labour, is being carried out. As a result of monitoring in 2009, over 200 officials were brought to administrative proceedings and 27 criminal cases were instituted.

State statistical reports include the figures reflecting the number of workers under the age of 18. These reports also include recommendations for special provisions guaranteeing the rights and additional safeguards provided by labour law and labour protection legislation against child labour, particularly children under 18, as well as ensuring their social protection in the workplace.

Additionally, on 2 October 2008, a Joint Statement of the Association of Farms, the Council of the Federation of Trade Unions and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population was adopted on the inadmissibility of the use of forced child labour in agricultural work.

A series of training seminars for employees of agencies on labour, media, trade union leaders and the administration of districts and cities to prevent child labour are also conducted on a regular basis.

Since 2008, in all regions of the country a "hotline" operates on child labour issues, which the children and their parents can call at any time, if their rights have been violated.

Elimination of the worst forms of child labour in Uzbekistan is being implemented by a number of methods:

- Creating conditions for worthy labour and new working places as an alternative to child labour;
- Strengthening social protections and increasing incomes to low-income families which, according to international experts, are the main providers of child labour;
- Improving the educational potential of every child;
- Strengthening monitoring over the enforcement of legislation — in particular on protection of the rights, freedoms and legal interest of children.

In the reports of the Director-General of ILO, a great deal of attention is again attached to the efforts at the national level in the spheres of creating and securing workplaces, in the conditions of the global economic and financial crisis, and also elimination of forced labour, including child labour.

Improving living conditions amidst the global financial crisis

At present in Uzbekistan there are a number of programmes aimed at mitigating the effects of the global financial crisis. These programmes, begun in 2009 and aimed to continue through 2012, have been outlined in detail in the book by the President of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov, entitled *The global financial-economic crisis, ways and measures to overcome it in the conditions of Uzbekistan*. One of the main objectives, among others, is addressing the decline in the living conditions of the population.

Around 50 per cent of the population and labour resources of Uzbekistan are concentrated in rural areas. That is why 2009 was declared as a "Year of Development and Improvement of the Countryside" and a State programme was adopted which implements special measures on the creation of workplaces and securing employment for the rural population. In particular, in 2009 more than 940,000 jobs were created. In the first quarter of the current year, that figure was 215,400, of which 150,100 jobs or almost 69.7 per cent, were in rural areas.

These measures are fully in compliance with other measures recommended by ILO and provisions of the global pact on workplaces.

2010 — "The Year of Harmoniously Developed Generation"

In Uzbekistan the current year has been designated as one in which major issues are to be addressed more aggressively, including:

- Improving the legal framework for protecting the rights and interests of children and youth, and strengthening the legal basis for their harmonious development.
- Forming a healthy generation, primarily through the provision of a healthy inheritance, further implementation of the programme "Healthy mother — healthy child" and the improvement of the reproductive health of mothers, children and adolescents.
- Accelerating the work being done in the field of physical education of the younger generation and children's sports, greater involvement in regular exercise among youth, especially girls in rural areas.
- Developing a set of measures to further promote and to solve existing problems in the development of small businesses and private entrepreneurship, and middle-class businesses, and to create conditions for involvement in entrepreneurial activities among youth, especially in rural areas.
- Enhancing care for young families, ensuring their legal and social protection, and creating the necessary conditions for the formation of healthy and strong families.

The Government of Uzbekistan conducts a range of activities in support of socially vulnerable families, and large families who need assistance. Since

independence, it has formed a complete system to provide State social support for mothers and children.

In 2006, the total spending for social services and social support accounted for 51 per cent; in 2009, this figure was already equal to 55.6 per cent; and in 2010 — 59.1 per cent. In 2010, investment in health care will equal 1.7 trillion soums, representing an increase of 30 per cent over 2009. Such attention to the needs of social sector development can rarely be noted in the world as a response to the global financial crisis.

We agree with the assessment of the Director-General of ILO, Juan Somavia, that there is a mixed picture which “emerges from the third Global Report and recent monitoring of progress towards the Millennium Development Goals”. In this context, it is stressed that Uzbekistan is gradually realizing measures on achievement of the Millennium Development Goals directed, first of all, to reduce poverty and to improve living standards, to activate the role of women in sustainable development of society.